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The Great Question,

Of the A U T H O R I T Y of the

Arch-Bishops, Bishops, & Clergy,

Of the present Constitution of the *Church of England*

Established by L A W,

*Whether truly Apostolical, or only Political,
Regal, and Parliamentary?*

Faithfully Examined, and clearly Resolved.

TO pretend *Authority*, and act without any, is doubly injurious; both to those, whose Authority is pretended, and to all who are concerned in the Exercise of it. This is universally true; but may be much aggravated by the Circumstances of the Persons any way concerned, and of the ~~Matters~~ wherein it is pretended and exercised. And from hence it may be perceived, that Pretence of *Episcopal Authority* is of it self a Crime of a very high degree; and yet this may be farther aggravated by the Addition of another Crime of like nature and degree; that is, *Schism*; when the Authority is not only pretended and usurped, but with this farther Iniquity, to cast out, or keep out, a true and just Authority. And from hence may be perceived, how reasonable it is that no Authority be admitted, trusted, or submitted to, without good Evidence, or sufficient grounds: And therefore so long as it is *doubtful*, it is as none till the Doubt be cleared, or it be ratified and confirmed by just and competent Authority. And because the *Episcopal Authority* of the whole Succession of those, who are now in Possession of the Temporalities of the Bishops of *England* from *Cranmer*, hath been questioned and denied from the beginning, it is the Concern of every Person in this Nation to be well satisfied of the Authority they pretend, or else to seek for some other, that is without question. And this is yet the more necessary or reasonable, because there are no Churches, either in the *East*, or in the *West*, or any part of the World, whose *Episcopal* or Ecclesiastical Authority is denied or questioned

England, which

May 6.

18
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2 *The Authority of the English Bishops, &c.*

at this day, but those, which call themselves *Reformed Churches*, and yet have no Communion with any Catholick Church in being before the pretended Reformation.

Tho' *Cranmer* had no true Canonical Election, nor was qualified for Episcopal Consecration, having married a second Wife, and she living, tho' kept concealed, yet since his Consecration hath not been questioned, and there are greater Matters to be considered, I shall pass by that, and supposing the Ordination and Consecration which he received to be good, proceed immediately to the Consideration of the Ordination and Consecration of others by Him; Whether that might confer any true Apostolical, either Episcopal, or Sacerdotal, Authority? and admitting it might till October 1535. when he received a *Commission* exactly agreeing with that published in the *History of the Reformation*, Vol. I. Rec. 14. p. 184. and in all but one particular with his second Commission in Vol. 2. Rec. 2. p. 90. as appears by a Note of Dr. *Yale*, principal Registrary and Vicar-General to *Mat. Parker*, upon a Transcript, (probably for a Precedent of such Commissions) wherein are noted the Dates of divers others then, and soon after, to the Arch-Bishop of York, &c. Yet is there great reason to doubt of it afterward. This is a Matter of great moment, which had been buried in Silence and Oblivion for some time, but, undoubtedly by a special order of Providence, brought to Light by two late Writers, who did good Service to necessary Truth, what-ever either of them intended. For, 1st, from hence may be observed divers matters of Fact of great Consequence.

1. That it was *Cranmer's* Project and Invention; which is confirmed by its agreement with his Principles otherwise declared; but is disingenuously, dishonestly and falsely imputed to *Bonner*, by the Historian, (and such as contrary to their own knowledge have written after him) for setting a wicked Example. 2. That it was not he alone, but the Arch-Bishop of York, and the Bishops of London, Lincoln, Winchester, &c. who accepted such Commissions; undoubtedly all of both Provinces either then, or soon after: For if any one had dared to stand out, it would have been soon publicly known, and taken notice of: Tho' he and his Friend *Cromwell* betrayed them all into it. 3. That this was continued in that Reign, may well be concluded from the Temper of that King, who would abate nothing of what he had once gotten, the Spirit and Concern of *Cranmer*, Arch-Bishop, and the Record of *Bonner's* Commission 4 years after, and the Order of Council in the beginning of K. Edward's Reign, to take out Commissions of the same form. 4. That all Promotions afterward in his (*Cranmer's*) time to any Episcopal Sees was by

by Commissions: Which is confirmed by the Order of Council aforesaid, and the Stat. 1. Ed. 6. c. 2.* Passim obtinuit ab Anno 1535. ad Annum 1553. says Wharton de Episc. Lond. in Bonner.

And, 2dly, from this matter of Fact it may be farther observed, that the Authority of these Persons, whom we presumed to be true Bishops of the Church of England, without all doubt, is not what we presumed; unquestionable, but at least greatly doubtful, not only in respect of Title to their Sees, but in respect of their Episcopal Authority it self, Whether they have any true Apostolical, or Ecclesiastical, Authority at all, or so much as Sacerdotal, or Clerical, or any other than merely Political? And if this be so, it *concerns all to look about us, to secure our Right and Title, not to any present Temporal Estates upon Earth, but to our future Eternal State in Heaven; and more especially after sufficient Notice. The Doubts are divers, and most of them Fatal, if but any one of those prove clear and undeniable against it. I shall propose only these following:

* V. Dodwell
of Schilim,
c. 18.

1. Whether the Commission doth not contain matter Heretical and Schismatical?

2. Whether the Acceptance of an Heretical and Schismatical Commission doth not make the Acceptors guilty of both, and by Consequence vitiate, or make the Ordination and Consecration of such Persons by such Persons irregular?

3. Whether a Commission declaring All Authority and Jurisdiction, as well Ecclesiastical as Secular, to proceed originally from the Regal Power, as the Supream Head and Spring; and that they, who before exercised any such, did it only Precario, &c. and delegating by the Words, Tibi Vices nostras committimus, Licence to Ordain, &c. Vice, Nomine, & Authoritate nostris; — per praesentes ad nostri Beneficiti voluntatem duraturas, doth convey any other Authority than what is really existent in the Fountain, at the time of the Grant? that is, merely Political, unless the King had received also by special Consecration any truly Episcopal.

4. Whether the Acceptance of such a Commission be not a Recognition of such an Authority as is therein declared, and a Renunciation of the Apostolical received from the Church?

5. Whether a Person acting under such a Commission may be intended to confer any other Authority than what is conveyed to him by such Commission?

6. Whether, when both the Consecrators and Consecrated have before accepted such Commissions, the Consecration is to be intended to be other than a Solemnity of Investiture (like the Coronation) to the Office delegated by the Commission, according to Cranmer's Opinion?

All these *Doubts* arise from the Matters of Fact aforesaid, and do all occur and concur in the Case of every Bishop, who was made since the Project of Commissions was brought into use during the Reigns of *Hen. 8.* and *Edw. 6.* and all but the last in the Case of all, who were Bishops at that time, and accepted any such Commission: but all, and something more peculiar in the Case of the Consecrators of *Matt. Parker*, the first Arch-Bishop since the second Schism, in the first Year of *Qu. Elizabeth*, and the rest then promoted, concerning their Consecration.

The Queen had ordered a *Commission* to *Cuthbert*, Bishop of *Durham*; *Gilbert*, of *Bath*; *David*, of *Peterborough*; *Anthony*, of *Landaff*; *William Barlow*, Bishop; and *John Scory*, Bishop, dated *Sept. 9.* to consecrate *Matt. Parker*, who was elected *Aug. 1.* by the Dean of *Canterbury*, and four Prebendaries, the rest not appearing, (*Wharton p. 153.*) and when nothing was done by them in near three months time, she granted another, dated: *Dec. 6.* to *Landaff*, *Barlow*, and *Scory*, aforesaid; and to *Coverdale*, some time of *Exeter*; *Richard*, Suffragan of *Bedford*; *John*, Suffragan of *Hereford*; and *John Bale*, Bishop of *Ossory* in *Ireland*, for them, or any four of them, to confirm and consecrate him. Both are recited by *Bramhall*, p. 449, 450. and the last was executed by *Barlow*, *Scory*, *Coverdale*, and *John*, Bishop of *Bedford*, as it is in the Register apud *Bramhall*, p. 1043.

Barlow was the Man, to whom (apud *Mensam Cathedræ sedente*) *Parker* was presented by the rest to be consecrated Arch-Bishop, and who performed the Office, as is related in the Register. But it is a wonderful thing, by what Chance or Providence it happened, that his own Consecration, who was the principal Actor in this, should no where appear, nor any positive Proof of it be found, in more than Fourscore Years, since it was first questioned, by all the Search that could be made by so many learned, curious and industrious Persons as Mr. *Mason* employed by the Arch-Bishop, and all the Assistants he had in his time, whose Book was printed 1613. and again with Additions, 1625. and 1638. Bishop *Bramhall*, and all the Assistance he could procure in his time, about the Year 1657. Dr. *Burnet*, encouraged by the Parliament 1679. and all the Helps and many Assistants he had; and the indefatigable Mr. *Wharton*, who had corrected and discovered so many Faults, Oversight and Mistakes in others before him; besides many others; that ever he was consecrated at all. It is true Bishop *Godwin*, Bishop of *Hereford*, says, that he was consecrated *Feb. 22. 1535.* but says neither where, nor by whom, nor produceth, or so much as refers to any Evidence

Evidence or Proof of what he saith. And tho' Bishop Bramhall would infer from thence that it was in *Wales*, and the Bishop of *Hereford* might know something of it ; yet both Mr. *Mason* and Mr. *Wharton* agree, and prove that what he saith cannot * be true. * He hath been found faulty in more things than this : But this he would undoubtedly have cleared if he could. *Mason* and *Bramhall* take much pains to prove it by *Circumstances* and *Probabilities*, for that all things were done for him, and to him, and by him, that belong to a true and compleat Bishop, except only that of Consecration ; and from the *Concatenation* of our *English* Customs ; especially from the *Restitution* of his *Temporalities*, which they would have us believe is always after Consecration. But whatever it ought to be, either by Law or Custom, it was not then always so observed, as before that, in the Case of *Stokesly*, Bishop of *London*, who had his *Temporalities* *July 14. 1530.* and was not consecrated till *Nov. 27.* after, *Whart. de Episc. Lond.* p. 189. and since twice in the case of *Bonner*, who, elected Bishop of *Hereford*, had *Restitution* of his *Temporalities* to his *Proctor*, while he himself was yet beyond-Sea ; and afterwards, elected Bishop of *London*, had his *Temporalities* *Nov. 18. 1539.* and yet was not consecrated till *April 4. 1540.* Nor is it more strange, that of all the *Acts* necessary for that purpose, the Consecration should be omitted, and especially at a time when it was set so light by, than that of all the *Records* and *Entries* of those *Acts*, that * only of the Consecration, if there had been any, should be wanting, when all the other *Acts* appear in their proper Courts, as *Bramhall* tells us, p. 482. but after all, at last concludes : *Neither doth this Consecration concern us so much, as the Fathers (those against whom he writes) imagine : there were Three Consecrators (which is the Canonical Number) besides him*, ibid. and so *Mason*, p. 370. and so both give up this point, and betake themselves to another Refuge, of a Canonical Number without him, which will not hold neither, as I shall observe by and by. But, first, one word more of this principal Consecrator, *Barlow*, who, I believe, was never consecrated himself.

He was elected *Jan. 16. 1538.* Bishop of St. *Asaph*, and confirmed the *23d* and about the same time was in the King's Service in *Scotland*; *Legationem apud Scotia Regem, ab Henrico Anglia Regis missus, obiit*, says *Wharton* : and *April 10.* following was elected Bishop of St. *David's*, the Translation confirmed by the Arch-Bishop the *21st*. and the *Temporalities* restored the *26th* of the same Month : but the Record mentions nothing of any Consecration preceding, but his Election and Confirmation by the Arch-Bishop only : *ipsumque sic electum Episcopum pradicta Ecclesia Me-nevens. praefecit.* The short space between his Election to St. *Asaph*, and

and Translation to St. David's, and his Absence in *Scotland*, might well prevent his Consecration for that time, and the *Translation*, especially if he continued any considerable time in *Scotland*, make his Consecration when he came home never questioned or thought on, especially having his Spiritualities by the Arch-Bishop's Confirmation, and his Temporalities restored by the King. And it is like enough he might concur with the Arch-Bishop in slight thoughts of such a *Formality*. For what-ever was his *Learning*, it seems, his *Virtue* was so little, and the *Offence*, that he and *Scory* had given by their Behaviour, so great, that they were never so much as restored by Qu. *Elizabeth* to their former Sees, but put into meaner ones; as the Historian informs us in his *Abridgment*, p. 250. Nor would she be Crowned by either of them, tho' she could hardly get any other to do it: Nor should *Parker* have been consecrated by them if the other four in the first Commission would have done it. But before his Election to St. *Asaph* he had been an active Promoter of the Reformation in *Wales*, and so doubtless promoted his own Interest in the Favour of the King and *Cranmer*.

Of the three Assistants, *Scory* and *Coverdale* were not Canonically elected, but promoted by Commission, and consecrated by *Cranmer*, *Hodskins*, and *Ridley*, by a new Form composed by Persons appointed by the King, and authorized under the Great Seal, according to the Act of Parliament, and so ordered, that no Church of the *Roman* Communion, tho' they all look upon it as no less than Sacrilege to re-ordain any, who have been duly ordained before, have ever since allowed the Ordination of any ordained by them or their Successors, or permitted them to perform the Office of Priests, without Re-ordination by some Bishop of their own Communion.

The last of the Three, who did actually assist, was *John Hodskins*, only Suffragan of *Bedford*, consecrated indeed *Anno 29. Hen. 8.* but when Commissions were in use, and therefore in the same case with those of that time before-mentioned; and besides, not rightly named in this Commission, but by the Name of *Richard*, (*v. Mason*, p. 414. *Bramhall*, p. 1025.) So that had he been without all other question, yet his Legal Authority by this Commission to act in this Consecration is questionable.

And here, before we proceed farther, it may be observed what a lame *Cause* this of the Consecration of *Matt. Parker* is in all respects, performed indeed by four Persons, but of those the first, and he to whom *Parker* is presented to be consecrated, never consecrated himself, that can be proved, and most likely never was.

Again,

Again, when these great Champions, *Mason* and *Bramhall*, after all their struggle, cannot make that point out; they fly to another Refuge, and tell us, that there were three Consecrators besides him, and that that is the Canonical Number. But here we find another not rightly named in the Original Record: so that here is another Doubt; and if this hold, they fail of their Canonical Number even according to their own account: But be that as it may; if Three be the Canonical Number for others, it is certain it is not the Legal Number for an Arch-Bishop, and when an Arch-Bishop is not one, as is plain in the *Stat. 25 Hen. 8. c. 20.* So that they do deceitfully in that; and *Parker* therefore could be no Legal Arch-Bishop: Nor was his Consecration and Constitution Canonical, or according to the Orders or Usage of the Church of *England* in particular for near a Thousand Years before, even from the beginning of the *English* Church, and of the whole Catholick Church, being confessedly the first of Seventy Arch-Bishops consecrated in that manner, and without Patriarchal Approbation, a matter of no little Importance in the Kingdom of Christ, as may be shewed upon another Occasion.

In the *Register* of this Consecration published by *Bramhall*, I understand not how his Death, &c. could be noted in that manner as it is printed, if it was not all written some time after that. Nor am I satisfied that it was ever printed in his Life-time, or so much as mentioned in any Book then in Print: but the Book pretended for it, said to be printed 1572. is so great a Rariety, that a Bookseller told me he would give Five Pounds for it; and what is by *Mason* alleadged out of it, *lib. 3. c. 18. n. 12.* proves it not; nor saith more than that he was elected, and consecrated at such a time, and by such Persons, but not one word of any Register: and what he alleadgeth out of the Statute 8 *Eliz. c. 1.* is false, and grossly fallacious; for the Statute hath not a word of any Register, but of Records only, as Statutes and Records of Law, which he writing in *Latin* renders *Archiva*, to deceive and abuse the Reader. So that there is no proof of this Register in being at that time, or in 20 years after those Records, which are entred in it. That such a thing should be done, and in such extraordinary manner, as of Seventy Arch-Bishops in that See, none before him was so ordered, as is related in his Life, and yet no History of that time, or Letter, or other Writing, be found, which makes mention of the manner of it, or any Person but only one Lord, is so strange, that it is incredible it should be done in any very publick manner, as is pretended, what-ever was done. And that part intituled *Rituum*

atque

atque *Ceremoniarum Ordo*, is so precise and punctual in things of little moment, as if it was fitted up some time after to answer the Doubts and Questions which were made. And to send for Priests out of Prisons to see and testify this Register so long after, doth not so much confirm the Credibility, as the Suspicion of the Antiquity and Authority of it. v. *Mason*, lib. 3. c. 18. n. 11. And for farther Evidence, (if more need after so deceitful a Citation of a printed Statute) how little Trust or Credit is to be given to the Authors of Mr. *Mason's* Book, the Citation of Mr. *Wadsworth's* Letter Manuscript, without noting the Date, the Pretence of others, who mention the Register in Print, without the Names of the Authors, or Titles of the Books, and the alledging *Camden*, Dr. *Collins*, and Dr. *Hall*, without the time when their Books were printed, which is all craftily done to impose upon the Reader, both do that effectually, and moreover shew how lame a cause it is in that particular also: For *Wadsworth's Letter*, which is now in Print, is dated but *April 1. 1615.* and the other Books will be found printed, I believe, but about the same time, which is nothing to the purpose. And what mysterious dealings there were about that time, the *Convocation-Book*, not long since published, which had been so long kept secret, is a notable Instance.

But in what is without question in that Register, because of Record elsewhere, the Queens Letters Patent for his Confirmation and Consecration, to which we may add, the Opinion of the Six Doctors, the most eminent of that Faculty *England* then afforded, faith *Fuller*, subjoined, there is what may satisfie that there was then such *Doubts and Questions* concerning the matter of the Consecration by those Persons, as made a *special Clause for Supply of all Defects* by the Queens Supream Authority, thought requisite to be inserted. And yet, it seems, that would not serve the turn, but afterward, in the 8th year of her Reign, a *special Act of Parliament*, drawn with all the Skill that could have been used, had it been for an Answer in Chancery, was thought farther requisite to settle the Authority of the new Bishops. And tho' it be pretended, that they were only *Questions at Law*, which may be true, but with a *Fallacy* in it: for they arose upon matters first determinable by the Canons and Orders of the Church, as appears by the Judges Opinions reported by *Brook* concerning Leafes and Estates made by K. *Edward's* Bishops, that they were *not good*, because they were *not consecrated*, and therefore *not Bishops*; yet if we look into the *Original of those Questions*, we shall find they were not then *Questions at Law*, but positive Determinations by the Church, of the *Nullity* of their Consecration, and *Defect*

Defect of Title. So *Taylor of Lincoln* was deprived ob Nullitatem *Consecrationis & Defectum Tituli quem habuit à Rege Ed. per Lit. Patentes*, and others the like. *Ridley* was degraded only of Priesthood, because they did not take him to be a Bishop ; but *Cranmer* of his Episcopal Dignity, because he had been duly consecrated. And no Church of the *Roman* Communion have ever since allowed the Ordination of this Church of *England*, established by Law, to be good, or permitted any Person ordained in it to the Office of Priesthood without Ordination by some other Bishop either of the *Latin*, or of the *Greek* Church, tho' they hold it no less than Sacrilege to re-ordain one, who had been duly ordained before, as was before noted.

Here was the Original of the Questions then made ; but there is another *Original* precedent to this, which perhaps was not then taken notice of, or not considered as it deserveth, of other *Questions* as considerable as any, which I have mentioned already ; the *Commissions* introduced, undoubtedly by *Cranmer*, Anno 1535. For they contain matter not only contrary to the most ancient Canons, in those words, *Nos tuis in hac parte Supplicationibus inclinati* : for those Canons order such as apply to Secular Powers in such cases, to be deposed and excommunicated : but moreover, monstrously Heretical in the *Declaration*, and Schismatical in the *Delegation* before-mentioned. Objections both of *Heresie* and *Schism* have been made by others ; but not for those matters : and two things have been replied, which may be likewise in this case : The one, that *Bonner*, and all the rest, and all Qu. *Mary's* Bishops, were in the same case ; and therefore è verorum Episcoporum *Albo in eternum expungendi*, saith *Mason*, p. 185. is true in part, of those who were in before her time : For *Cranmer* was not only the Projector and Promoter of that, and other such wicked Inventions, but also the Decoy to betray the rest into the Mischiefs, as well as the Instrument to betray the King and Kingdom into the Sin ; and accordingly was charged with both by *Brooks*, Bishop of *Gloucester*, in that Queen's time, as we are informed by the Historian, who would help him out ; but 'tis with an Answer impossible to be true : yet as to the rest it is false, and the Inference false : For all those things were rectified in the Bishops of her time : which cannot be said of any of the rest, either before or since. And the other, when well considered, will prove as false and deceitful ; and so both rather confirm, than answer the Objection : It is grounded upon an Opinion of the Schoolmen, and the Councils of *Florence* and *Trent* ; that neither *Schism*, nor *Heresie*, can vacate the indelible Character of Episcopal Authority once duly and effectually conferred ; no more

than Baptism duly administred. But tho' generally the Baptism of Schismaticks and Hereticks hath been allowed for good upon their return to the Unity and Doctrine of the Church, yet were there special cases anciently, which were never allowed. And so, and much more in Orders, tho' generally this may hold, yet there may be such Special cases, wherein it may not hold: And such I take this to be. For, if either the declared Opinion, or the matter of Fact, or both together, be inconsistent with the very End and Intention of Baptism or Ordination, in such special case they can neither be allowed to be good or valid. As if a Jew, or a *Platonist*, who denieth *Jesus Christ* to be the Messiah, baptize another of the same Belief in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, this cannot be allowed to be Christian Baptism. So if a Bishop believe and profess that there is no other *Christian Sacrifice* than vocal or mental Prayers and Alms, and ordain another, who believes and professes the same, in manner and form otherwise sufficient for Priests Orders, this cannot be thought a good Ordination to Priesthood, or to confer more than Deacons Orders, if so much. And this is the common case of **Protestants**, and hath been so ever since **Luther's dispute with the Devil**, related by himself, tho' there are some of the most learned of another mind. And such is plainly the case of the **Commissions** before-mentioned, which contain an express *Recognition* of all Authority in the King, and by consequence a *Renunciation* of all other, not only Papal, but Episcopal, more than what is derived from the Regal; and a *Delegation* only of such: And therefore the Consecrations, how-ever performed, of Persons on both sides acting under such Commissions, could be no other than Solemnities, tho' Religious of Investiture into such Authority as is delegated by the Commission: and that could be but Political, unles the King had had any truly Episcopal regularly derived from the Original Special Commission of Christ. Nor could such Persons convey any other to their Successors.

In this there was certainly *Digitus Dei*, the Wisdom of a Divine Providence, to raise up an Adversary to correct the Obstinacy of the Church, which would not reform, and to raise an Emulation, and give Admonition of divers things amiss: but so as to be but for a time, and therefore imperfect, as hath been rightly observed by a late Author. And the time seems now near expired. And therefore hath the same most Wise Providence now lately raised up a *New Question* between the present *Political Bishops* of this *Legal Church*, and such an Advocate for those of them who are deprived, as had unanswerably asserted their Cause upon the true Principles.

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of the Kingdom of Christ, had they themselves come in by those: but effectually done more than ever he intended, by such Evidence and Arguments, as by a plain and easie application to the Deprivations by Stat. 1 Eliz. c. 1. much more strongly prove Queen Elizabeth's Bishops to have been meer Intruders, and therefore Nulli; and that the Contenders on both sides are no better themselves than they whose Successors they are; and the Cause he is engag'd in besides indefensible, without disclaiming the Principles of the Reformation, and of the present Constitution of this Church. This may be seen in the *Vindication of the Deprived Bishops, asserting their Spiritual Rights against a Lay-Deprivation*, printed Anno 1692. 40. if it can be had, or in the *Abstract* of it lately printed: and the *Application in the Letter to the Vindicator*.

What-ever may be allowed in matters of the World, I think it a very profane and wicked thing, in Arguments of Religion to use any thing of Deceit, Fallacy, or Cavilling; for they ought not to be mentioned but with Reverence: But when the Hand of God appears so manifest in bringing suppressed Truth to Light, it is dangerous to neglect it, much more to oppose it in such manner, lest they who do it should be found to fight even against God. And therefore I hope this will be very seriously and well considered, by all sincere and truly conscientious People: and not only the Case that this Nation is in, but also the Duty of such Circumstances both at home, and in respect of the Church of God abroad.

And, first, it is to be considered, Whether God hath not concluded, as I may say, all under Sin? And whether that doth not oblige all to Humiliation under His mighty Hand, and mutual Condescension and Charity to one another? Whether this, which by vain Men hath been cryed up for a *Glorious Church*, doth not appear at last to be *no Church at all?* and their Clergy, who were thought the Glory of it, be not a meer *Political Order*, unhappily introduced and substituted in the Place of such, as derive their Authority from the Commission of Christ to his Apostles, but, in truth, are no more than * merely *Teachers*, as the dissenting Ministers are commonly and properly so called by their People? For without a duly authorized Ministry, all agree, there can be no Church, properly so called. Nay, Whether the dissenting Ministers of all Parties have not the Advantage both in the Innocency, and in the Authority of their Calling? in the Innocency, because they do not betray the Rights of the Church of Christ: and in the Authority, because from Christian Assemblies, and not from the Civil Power, which may be *Jews, Mahometans, Infidels or Atheists.*

* The two principal parts of Priesthood are partly rejected, and partly neglected: justly for want of Authority, whether by Providence, Conscience, or both.

Atheists. And whether the Fruits and Effects of their Ministry be not as good and plentiful in their Congregations, as the other in their Parishes, and Diocesses? Where are better Fruits than Mr. *Baxter's* at *Kiderminster*? or Mr. *Elliot's* in *America*?

And as to the *Church of God abroad*, doth not Mr. *Baxter*, on the one side, and Bishop *Bramhall*, on the other, reckon up whole Heads of false and groundless Charges which have been raised against them? Hath not God by his Providence removed the Motives of temporal Interest, which partly promoted, and partly supported the pretended Reformation under that first Race of Princes; and so altered the case, that the present Constitution is not defensible without disclaiming those false Principles? Hath He not prepared the way to a Reconciliation and Peace in the Church, and a more effectual Peace in Christian States, by the Peace lately concluded by the Means of a Confederacy with Catholick Princes? And would not a Proposal of Just and Reasonable Terms of Accommodation and true Christian Union, oblige the other side to a Reformation of much of what is amiss, and much mend our own Case? Hath not this Holy Providence discovered to us a Necessity we are under to do it? And would not this be a Glorious Work for King *William* to undertake, and the Crown and Glory of all to accomplish it, and demonstrate Him an Instrument rais'd up by God indeed? And can he be a Loyal Subject in the Kingdom of Christ, who would not do his utmost endeavour to promote a matter of so much importance to it? Certainly he can be no Loyal Subject of the Kingdom of *England*, who can see things in such a Case, and be afraid to speak it. If all this be not a *Providential Call*, I know not what is; but think it no Wisdom for any Man to experiment the Truth of it, by a dangerous Neglect. What the over-ruling Providence of God seems now to call, to lead, and even constrain us to, by removing Obstacles, affording Opportunities, and discovering so great a Necessity and Obligation, is no more than what hath been long since thought necessary, and much desired by divers very Learned, Judicious, Moderate and Pious Persons: And I believe it will prove the truest Wisdom to consider these Works of God, and conform to the Motions of the Supreme Wisdom, least we kick against the Prick, and dash upon a Rock.

F I N I S.



